Review article / Pregledni rad

WELLNESS TOURISM APPROACHES TO IMPROVING QUALITY OF LIFE OF MOBILE USERS

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ABSTRACT

Nowadays, the increasing use of information and mobile technologies and the ignorance of their health risk for consumers provoked this study. The investigation was oriented to an evaluation of the negative effects of excessive use of mobile phones within the students and the assessment of their wellness/health prevention culture. The results outlined the negative impact of GSM daily use on mental and physical level of consumers as memory and attention problems, psycho-emotional stress, headache, insomnia, etc. and on the other hand, lack of information about the impact of mobile technology on human health. The young generation would pay attention to balance between developing mobile technology and health condition. The assessed abilities of wellness tourism as an anti-stress therapy are described in finding the golden mean between information technology, health condition and quality of life. The possibilities of wellness tourism to improve health and quality of life of students are in line with main social effect for young people – a positive representation of person with good social communication and constructive solutions for life challenges.

KEYWORDS*:* IT, GSM, wellness tourism, health prevention, quality of life

1. INTRODUCTION

Our daily life is connected with the constant use of the Internet and our social contacts are carried out mainly through mobile technologies. There is no sector of human activity that is not strongly influenced by the dynamic development of information technology. Our connection

with the global world is marked by two important circumstances – we are always in a social network and well-informed, but the growing dynamics in the economic and personal life invisibly impact on our health. So, stress as a phenomenon with its various dimensions accompanies our existence and quality of life.

Quality of life encompasses the levels and forms of the common welfare of the population, including social status of individuals, their respective statuses and sub-statuses, the objective ones living and working conditions, standard of living, access to various material resources and services, types of consumption and lifestyles, as well as subjective perception, satisfaction and evaluation of these key dimensions. The core of Wellness and SPA culture is the perceived need and aspiration to achieve the whole well-being of the personality – a harmonized multidimensional model, focused to impact on the physical, spiritual, emotional, and human mental health [1, 2]. Wellness culture and Wellness tourism, which is based on a holistic approach, is a multidimensional system aimed to recreation and nature health. Wellness tourism offers different anti-stress programs and psycho-emotional comfort [3, 4].

Nowadays, the increasing use of information and mobile technologies, especially among children and young people (Fig. 1), and the ignorance of the health risk for consumers as impact on memory, attention deficit or hyperactivity, reduced educative skills, etc. [5, 6] provoked this study.

Fig. 1. An active use of mobile technologies by children

2. EMPIRICAL STUDIES

In order to evaluate the impact of cell phones using by young generation on quality of life and to present recreation anti-stress tourist services, three empirical surveys are conducted. The target groups of the studies are the young people who are among the largest users of smart technologies and in this sense can be considered as a risk group.

A. In the first survey, conducted during 2019-2020 via online questionnaire, the respondents are students from the University of Library Studies and Information Technologies – ULSIT (Sofia, Bulgaria), who are studying for bachelor's and master's degrees in the professional fields of Informatics and Computer Sciences and Public Communications and Information Sciences. The aim is to be included people with different professional profiles in the sample. Men are 136 (68%) and women – 64 (32%). Youth students predominate – x=24.33, sd =7.38, and the age range is 18-49. The respondents with secondary education are 128 (64%), with

college – 40 (20%), and higher education – 32 (16%). In the capital (Sofia) live 131 (65.5%), regional city – 31 (15.5%), another city – 32 (16%), and village – 6 (3%) of the students surveyed. The singles are 142 (71%), the married – 22 (11%), the separated / divorced – 9 (4.5%), and in cohabitation with a partner – 27 (13.5%), as children have only 37 (18.5%) vs. 163 (81.5%) are without children. The average monthly income of the respondents is between 500-700 leva. The majority of students study and work – 112 (56%) and only study – 88 (44%).

The questionnaire contains a screening and demographic block with closed-ended questions and modules with open-ended questions, which aim to analyze consumer attitudes and user experience with GSM, as well as the impact of long phone conversations on mental and physical well-being. Thus, participants have to answer questions such as number of calls that they normally have per day, duration per call and the effects that they experience when using a mobile phone for a long period of time. The data were processed with the statistical software IBM SPSS Statistics 21. The mathematical-statistical techniques, used for data analysis, are: descriptive statistics, Pearson's linear correlation, and content analysis.

The results show that all respondents have a GSM device and at least once daily phone calls. The average duration of phone conversations is between 15-20 minutes. The majority of respondents (75%, N=150) report that as a result of frequent and prolonged conversations with GSM, certain dysfunctional mental and/or physical conditions, such as hearing impairment, headache, dizziness, anxiety, exhaustion, insomnia, stress, depression, memory and attention problems, etc. are observed. Only 25% (N=50) do not report any changes in their life status. Correlation analysis also indicated that the increase of the mobile phone conversation duration enhances the physical and mental disturbances ($r=0.687$, $p<0.001$). Similar findings are reported in [7, 8, 9]. Based on the results obtained, it can be concluded that the intensive use of mobile phones causes a number of negative effects on the optimal functioning of the personality according to the subjective assessment, given by the respondents.

B. In the second survey, an assessment of the Wellness and health culture of 58 Bulgarian and Hungarian students, active users of mobile technologies, was provided. Their duty's profile was: students from 3 Universities in Sofia and one in Budapest with a different main focus of education: Computing and Information Sciences, Sports Sciences, Tourism and Catering and Alternative Tourism. An anonymous online 15-minute survey among students was completed. The main research line was to study Wellness and sports habits of respondents using two questionnaire's panels, comparative analysis of obtained results with published data.

- **Survey "Students' Wellness and sports habits"**

The interviewed participants were from Bulgaria and Hungary. Their profile was: 40 Bulgarian students from National Sport Academy, Sofia /26 MSc students in SPA Management/, University of Forestry, Sofia /14 BSc students in Alterative Tourism/ and 18 Hungarian students from Metropolitan University, Budapest /BSc students in Hotel Management/. The survey was conducted in 2019-2020. Age of the respondents was 20-27 y.o. The focus of the study was an evaluation of sports activity, recreation and the degree of use of the Internet in everyday life activity of students. The defining question in the survey was: **- How many times annually do you go for:** Wellness/SPA, bathing, thermal therapies for anti-stress programme, outdoor activities (general), outdoor activities (forests, mountains), outdoor activities (water side – lake, river, sea), outdoor activities (sport activities – competition), outdoor activities (sport activities – recreation)?

Some of the participants stated that sport is part of their work commitments, but in their free time they would like to engage in recreational tourism /28% of the National Sport Academy/. Students of Alternative Tourism are not actively involved in sports. Only 14% of them has sports activity regularly and include different type of sports in their tourist trips as climbing, forest recreation tourism, swimming, jogging, etc. Hungarian students practiced sports and this continues during their tourist destinations (82%).

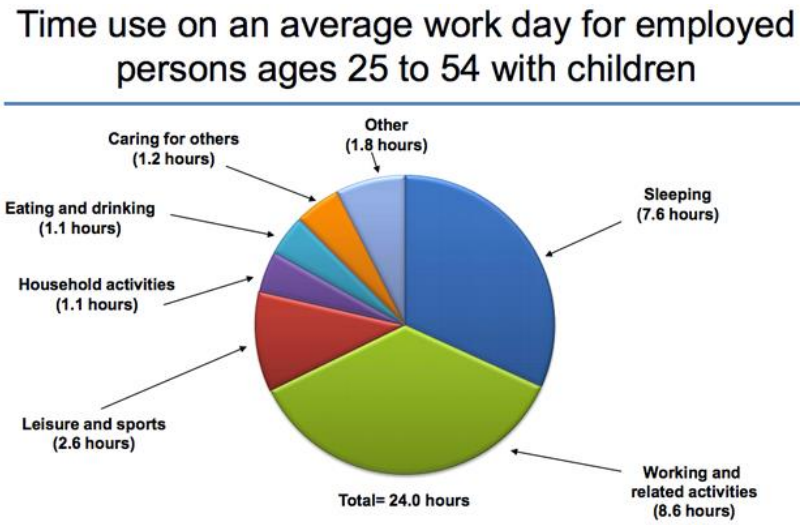
C. The third research was in line with students' health self-assessment.

- **Survey "Students self-assessment of energy"**

The defining question in the survey was: **"Do you have energy for daily activities?"**
The core of obtained results is feeling and self-esteem regarding to duty, habits and free time. And for research aims, we pay attention to health prevention by gathering information from the following question: "**How often do you use the mobile tools when you are outdoors?"**

Comparing our results to data from the National Wellbeing Service – UK, we have to mention results for Bulgarian respondents "Taking part in sports or physical exercise (every day or almost every day or at least once a week): Finland (72.5%) vs. Bulgaria (12%)" and to remark some trends in students' habits: some of them ignore the sports activity, wellness and outdoors recreation. Students' five indicators for satisfaction of life, based on poor physical activity as web browsing, using different social platforms, gaming, leisure time/nothing doing/, party club relax, eating and drinking. If we compare our results with those of Thompson, 2012 (Fig. 2), we will establish an analogy in leisure management of the Bulgarian and the USA students. One more thing, the USA research was conducted in 2012. And unfortunally habits of our young generation replace the global trends: leisure time without proactive health prevention. The mobile footprint changed our thinking and the personal comfort as an element of quality of life has so different measurement [5].

Fig. 2. Ten Cool Facts About How Americans Spend Their Time



Source: Derek Tompson, 2012. Your Day in a Chart: https://www.theatlantic.com/business/archive/2012/06/your-day-in-a-chart-10-cool-facts-about-how-americans-spend-our-time/258967/

The social impact of the Wellness culture and mobile and smart technologies on the quality of life of young generation is debatable [10, 11]. In other hand, social impact of development of

Wellness and SPA tourism destinations network is described and helps us to promote proactive anti-stress practices [12]. Wellness culture is a worldview, a way of life that reflects the constant human pursuit of harmony between mind, spirit and body [1, 3]. Its modern projection reflects the achievements of medicine, physiotherapy, health prevention and Wellness tourism applies all of them. One more comparison in self-assessment in the area of life satisfaction – the satisfied young people in the UK are 71.8%, in the EU are 69.3%, in Denmark they are 91% and in Bulgaria they are 38.3% only for far 2011.

The special outcome of our survey was concerned with health assessment of the students. The evaluation was done based on wellbeing self-assessment questionnaire. Some interesting results were obtained: Hungarian students managed their free time by spending outdoors- spas, forests and lake area.

The surveyed Bulgarian students (86%) do not attend SPA, wellness, forest tourism, and outdoor activities in general. They preferred to manage free time indoor, watching movies, web browsing, home relax, etc. using comfort of digitalization. Obviously, digital re-arrangement of the tourist environment also leaves its mark on the management of leisure time [13]. Following the UNWTO's appeal in 2018 for "support digital technologies that can transform the way we travel, reduce the ecological burden of tourism and bring the benefits of tourism to all" [14], we must obtain a balance between proactive health prevention and the digital environment. Some digital transformation in tourism impacts on travel environment and mobile users [15, 16].

Today, the telehealth/mobile health services help us to realize the health condition. But stress environment pushes our thinking to create a stress management plan, including mobile/smart technologies and nature life. The biofeedback apps help mobile users to obtain a healthy sleep, better physical condition and quality social performance.

The experience with Wellness programs to improve health is well-known [17, 18, 19]. Wellness tourism is a proactive health care, motivates us for healthy living according to Nature rules. All ranges of rich Wellness services faced to improve quality of life.

3. CONCLUSION

In line with our idea that a full social life leads to satisfaction and a high assessment of the quality of life, the mobile users should be to have a high standard and quality of life. But the evaluation of quality of life is based on assessment of very important indicators as health condition, access to cultural environment and SPA and Wellness treatment. In this connection, wellness culture of the young generation is a prerequisite for creation of suitable balance between living in the mobile environment and well-being as an image of complete health of body, mind, and spirit. Wellness is a personal choice and responsibility of the individual for health prevention and good quality of life [20].

Wellness as a philosophy is an individual way of influencing, but at the same time it is strongly influenced by the environment and the constantly changing people's living conditions. Obviously, wellness tourism gives us the feeling of a better quality of life and happiness in our busy day.

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